

THE WATERGATE INITIATIVE/NETWORK
Making Your Good Life Even Better

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Dear Friend,

I am sending this to you because our interests met in connection with the gift given to all of us by Beacon Hill Village. During the intervening two years, I have actively reflected on the various topographies of aging in our country, in search of a path along which vast numbers of older adults could travel, in the comfort of a community, armed with that most valuable commodity of our time: information.

This is the story of The Watergate Initiative, which was based somewhat on the BHV model. It explains why TWI had to be reinvented, and what it became. It also proffers an alternative to the BHV model for groups without the resources or the desire to construct, maintain, and financially sustain, a Village. A Network is free, requiring no financial sustenance, and is useable in all geographies.

I have tried to accommodate readers' staggered involvement with the subject, and to continue the frank and open-source spirit of BHV (our "mother ship" for any hybrid progeny our imaginations can devise). Please forward this document to every person and entity you feel could benefit, and ask that they do the same.

Sincerely,

Patricia Moore
(Mrs. Arthur Cotton Moore)
Founder: The Watergate Initiative + TWI/Network

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You're getting on in years, and you need help taking care of yourself....

Old Paradigm: You leave your home and move to a nursing home, where you will live for the rest of your life.

New Paradigm: You stay in your home and the services you need come to you, so you can live at home for the rest of your life.

For that simultaneously simple and profound new construct, we are all indebted to a few sophisticated and imaginative Boston residents who created Beacon Hill Village – a downright elegant thought experiment if ever there was one -- which has generated national interest.

THE WATERGATE INITIATIVE

Along with the rest of the country, I first learned about BHV in a 9 February 2006 article in the *New York Times*; on 10 February, I started planning a similar organization to operate among the three residential buildings within The Watergate complex in Washington D.C. On 5 February 2007, TWI was launched with 59 members, the second such program in the country. Our shared aim was to create an “insurance policy” of services that would be available when we needed them.

In significant contrast to BHV, we composed a comprehensive program of health and medical services beyond what one’s personal physician provides, forming Preferred Partnerships with entities that offer home care, physician house calls, geriatric medicine, pain management, care managers of catastrophic medical events, and hospice care.

Complementing our basic program was our stated intention to be good citizens of The Watergate, our city, and our country through various good works, such as the tutorial we organized at The George Washington University Medical Center for people interested in forming similar programs.

Like other new organizations at that time, we adopted the core features of BHV: the non-profit status; the \$500 annual dues per person; and the merits of a Social Worker as Executive Director. However, we adopted none of its financial positions, particularly the oft-recommended initial \$100,000.00:

(i) There would be no contributions from our Board of Directors to get us started, nor in subsequent years to keep us going. Our feeling was that no one able to live at The Watergate needed financial largesse from his neighbors; and

(ii) There would be no grant applications for money from foundations, no fund-raising drives, and certainly no monies sought from either the DC or the Federal Government. Our feeling was that planning for the expense of one's later years is a personal responsibility, and that the coffers of those sources should absolutely only be available to our country's truly needy citizens.

We were a volunteer organization, dedicated to "*neighbors helping neighbors*," operating within - and grounded by -- a superb home-centered program. Our membership was limited to the finite number of apartments in The Watergate, and we were quite satisfied with 59 members, a good number for a core group of like-minded people, which would (or would not) increase naturally.

We worked out of our apartments, using our own office supplies. We saved our dues money, feeling that having an Executive Director and the accessories that go with that, solely depended on whether or not we ever accrued sufficient funds from dues, and it was agreeable either way.

Approximately a year into this very worthy experiment, it became clear that TWI could not continue in its configured form, for these reasons:

(i) There was an absence of need: Members did not need any services from our Preferred Partners, or organized activities, having active and independent lifestyles, and so began to question the reason to pay \$500 a year in dues. The menu of assistances offered by BHV was also not needed because of the commercial area on The Watergate ground level. Even though investing one's self in an organization is the only route to a gainful relationship with it, the absence of need evolved into a disinclination to serve on committees, to serve as officers, and such, which made TWI untenable; and

(ii) The heavy infrastructure was just plain wrong for people who only wanted to save each other from institutional living *at some future time*. Non-profit status equals a lawyer, dues, bookkeeping, an accountant, tax returns, and meetings that want minutes, along with all the substrata that goes with it.

At the Boston conference, I got a glimpse of the width and depth of the BHV model, and I remember being stunned. During one of my presentations, I commented on it being a "big business" with a built-in "imperative to always grow." At the time, however, I was so consumed by the genius of its core idea, that I cast that insight aside, and did not think of it again until I confronted the unworkability of TWI - only then did I revisit that observation, and only then did I viscerally comprehend that a Village was inescapably a gargantuan entrepreneurial enterprise.

However, that all being said, there came a tipping point which caused me to hire a firm to strip TWI of its legal status. It took about two months for me to be able to even start thinking positively, much less creatively, about a reinvention of TWI.

During that time, I also gave considerable thought to what, if anything, I possibly could contribute to the subject. At my core, I'm a hospice volunteer, and there is much to be done to spread its role in our healthcare system. Among its many personal satisfactions, TWI was a vehicle which introduced me to a whole new pocket of service – helping members who had received a life-altering diagnosis, to navigate through their defense against the terror of aloneness. Whatever TWI would become, it was important to me that I keep these privileges.

CRITERIA FOR THE REINVENTION OF TWI

- (i) It must be something with no administrative or managerial infrastructure; no dues, no financial sustenance; and no committees;
- (ii) It must be invulnerable to specious lawsuits, to the maximum extent possible;
- (iii) It must be easy to start, and sufficiently low-maintenance to allow me time to stretch a few ideas within this new and fascinating vocation;
- (iv) It must be something that could disseminate information on a wide range of issues such as health and medical, people connectors, and a compelling interest that participants could share; and
- (v) A greedy wish: Whatever the new TWI would be, I wanted it to be favorable to vast numbers of people – to the utmost extent possible – who should also have the chance to stay in their homes, buttressed by the sweet comfort of a community of like-minded neighbors, and who should also have access to the information they need to do that.

The burden, then, was to come up with how I who live in a city, and you who live in the suburbs, and you who live in exurbia could operate separately, but with somewhat similar tools; and to come up with how to parse – at least to some minimal degree -- the current impediments of geography and personal financial resources.

I started contacting colleagues around the country who are involved in similar organizations, asking questions, looking for a direction. Twice, I carefully watched and listened to the CDs from the BHV Boston conference, hoping to grab the hint of a solution. I carefully read -- again and then again -- the BHV Manual in search of something I could follow; I even made the following list of its structure, taped it over my desk, and stared at it -- magically thinking how I could scrub it down, but only getting intimidated by the exquisitely lacy web imagined by the BHV Founders. I got nowhere.

Governance: The Board of Directors; Management, Membership, Nominating, Program, and Development Committees.

Income Sources: Member Dues, Foundations, Donations from Board Members, and Donations from Others.

Range of Expenses: Payroll, Programs, Member Services, Membership and Outreach, Marketing/Public Relations, Rent and Utilities, Office Expenses, Insurance, Professional Consultants, Accounting, Tax Return Preparation, Fundraising, and Legal Fees.

Documentation: Community Survey, Business Plans, By-Laws, Marketing Plan (annual), PR Plan (annual), Fundraising Plan (annual), Advertising Program (annual), Calendar (monthly), Newsletter (quarterly), Budget (annual), and Annual Report .

Last December, while attending Renaissance Weekend, with pen and pad and a list of desired criteria in hand, I searched out mathematicians and computer scientists, quickly described the problem, and asked for their gut advice and random thoughts. The computer people considered the means of communication through the vector of existing (and around-the-corner) platforms. The mathematicians considered commonality through the vector of probabilities.

I worked those two poles up and down and in and out. Two months later, I had a conceptual plan that seemed to meet the criteria, and two months after that, I sent a letter to each Watergate apartment, inviting the resident to participate in the reinvented TWI.

THE WATERGATE INITIATIVE/NETWORK

TWI/N is a virtual community, exclusively for residents of the three Watergate residential buildings. There are no memberships, no dues, no Board of Directors, no committees, and the ether is free from Google Groups.

Its goal is to enhance the lives of participants by connecting them to each other, so they can help and learn from each other – and to be a boundless clearinghouse for all manner of information. TWI/N has three focus areas: Health and Medical; Social and Cultural and Intellectual; and Where we Live -- every aspect of our immediate neighborhood, The Watergate complex.

HOW TO CREATE YOUR NETWORK

A. Define your geography.

Your Network needs a strict identity which – by its name – defines (or at least indicates) its physical boundaries. That definition is important because it is the first acknowledgment of your community. You need to think “neighborhood” and “boundaries” in as sharp and logical a way as you can, so people in the group – right out of the gate – experience the positive satisfaction of “belonging.” Where you live is your Network’s physical footprint.

Apartment Buildings:

Whether you live in an apartment complex, or a large single apartment building, participation should be available to all of its residents; large residential buildings – by design -- are perfect Network territory, needing only to be connected. If you live in a building with less than 100 units, its demographics may make your boundary a matter of judgment, i.e., whether or not you include an adjacent small building, the 200 single-family homes that surround your building, and so on.

Don't fear a footprint that totals several hundred residences – everyone will not participate.

Single Family Homes:

Whether you live in the city, the suburbs, or the exurbs, a Network is an advantageous and fitting extension of a citizens association or a housing development association, because they are existing organizations with physical boundaries that equal a neighborhood large enough to sustain it. If your association has no interest in having a Network under its umbrella, you should proceed to offer it to residents within the same physical boundaries of the neighborhood.

If you live in an area without existing associations, you need to study a map showing all streets and roads, to determine logical boundaries; if that fails to disclose workable lines of demarcation, study the map from the perspective of your zip code, certainly an already existing territory.

B. Define your focus areas.

TWI/N has three carefully considered subject areas, each of which offers something for everyone of any age, demographic, and geography. Each can be stretched to satisfy specific participant/community needs and interests – and – each is sufficiently limber to be just about anything you need it to be:

Health/Medical: TWI/N maintains a roster of Preferred Partners who represent a complement of health and medical services beyond what our personal physicians provide – so whenever we need help, we have a starting point at the ready. Whatever your age or medical profile, there is a soothing peace in knowing that recognized professional help is standing by for as short or long a time as you need, which is particularly comforting for your participants who want to stay in their homes and not ever move to an institutional environment.

The mathematics of probability would suggest that some portion of any reasonably-sized group has had the same surgery or disease or cancer or concerns that you are facing. A Network lets you send out a query so participants can share their experience and help by answering questions, sharing opinions about doctors and information about procedures, as well as forming support groups.

Social/Cultural/Intellectual: We only get out of life what we put into it, and we all should enjoy compounding interests, and therefore, a more healthy life. Again, the mathematics of probability: whatever you like to do -- (play poker or bridge; do good works by volunteering; meet single people; learn to tango, and such) a portion of others in your group will also like to do. All you have to do is ask.

Where we Live: People who live in the same apartment building, neighborhood, housing development, or zip code share endless subjects of mutual interest because of their geography – street lights, crime, schools, local government, the real estate investment in their homes, and so on – each capable of weaving thick bindings of community, and, as we all know, there is economic, civic, and political power in groupness.

C. Your Network and your local hospital.

Your local hospital is the most important component of your Network – think of it as your medical central. Two years ago, one of the first meetings I had was with our local hospital -- The George Washington University Hospital and Medical Center.

I wanted to establish a relationship that would put meaning in GW being “our” local hospital; I wanted it to work with us regarding its existing programs and departments, and to work with us when we suggested new ones.

D. Select your Preferred Partners.

When starting TWI, it took me a bit of time to compose a menu of appropriate professional fields, and more time to translate that conceptual plan into this menu of Preferred Partners, which we maintained in TWI/N.

A “Preferred Partner” means nothing more than this: that you have designated it – by whatever means you deemed befitting -- as your preference within its field.

These professionals will help us in now-unimagined ways, as we need them. Given the unknowableness of our individual medical fate, and our knowledge of the current health care environment, knowing that whatever kind of help we may need is standing by, just plain feels good -- we are not alone no matter what befalls us.

If you are in the Washington DC area, please do feel free to consider and appropriate our list; but wherever you are in the country, I urge you to study these websites, which are not only comprehensive with regard to standard services in each field, but superb tutorials which will give you a basis of standards when you select your own Preferred Partners from like-entities in your area.

HouseWorks

www.house-works.com

Home care services can be arranged for in several ways: You can vet various companies and distribute a list to your participants; you can form a legal partnership with a single company and be literally invested in each other; you can start or acquire and operate your own home care company; your participants can exchange home care services on a volunteer/time-banking basis; or, you can select one home care company.

Unless your participants want to provide home care help on a time-banking basis, by all that I know, you should have one Preferred Partner company.

Home care help is probably the first service most of us will need. HouseWorks is the Preferred Partner of Beacon Hill Village, and two years ago, I proposed -- and diligently pursued -- its expansion to the Washington area, and am extremely proud to have succeeded.

Faith-based organizations and local government social services can make important contributions in neighborhoods with modest financial resources, particularly in Networks which plan to provide home care help through volunteer time-banking.

Advanced Care Management www.advancedcaremanagement.com

Geriatric Care Managers provide professional advocacy for older adults and people with disability. They help clients and their families make educated decisions, and find solutions for a long list of healthcare needs from catastrophic and chronic disease management to family consensus on care.

The George Washington University Hospital www.gwhospital.com

Our relationship with GW deepens each time our members have contact with its various departments, who have been not only responsive to our needs, but enthusiastic in working with us to create new services.

Senior Advantage Program

The Advantage program charges only \$10 for lifelong membership; it is a valuable identification marker within the patient population of the hospital, gives expedited access to its departments and medical specialists, and has been quite helpful to us. If your local hospital lacks such a program, urge it to start one.

OnSite Medical Access

By working with three doctors at GW's Medical Faculty Associates, Department of Emergency Medicine, I succeeded in helping to create a new service, which offers old-fashioned physician "house calls." Your hospital's ER Department can do the same.

Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine

This medical group of Doctors, Fellows, Physician Assistants, and Social Workers provide care to patients who have achieved their 75th birthday. In addition to consultations in Internal Medicine and Palliative Medicine, the group has a range of accessory health programs focusing on memory, balance, exercise and nutrition - and - offers visits to homebound patients in Northwest Washington. Geriatricians are a fading breed and may not be part of your local hospital; in that event, work with your hospital to cobble together a medical team focused on older adults, and which also offers visits to homebound participants.

Capital Hospice and Capital Palliative Care Consultants

www.capitalhospice.org

Hospices provide a range of services to patients and their families in support of living an independent and active life. In addition, hospices work with one's personal physician to manage the pain of people who are chronically ill.

E. Form a Google Group.

Pursuant to the advice of the computer scientists I consulted, TWI/N operates within Google Groups. Because it is a free service, it is fair that there is no GG human to talk with for help; support is provided by a massive help site whose questions are answered by the good geeks of the world. That being said, I attest that a site is easy to set up, and easy to manage; I did ours, and you can do yours. Let me take you through it:

1. Name your Network

Ageism is very much alive in every nook and cranny of our country; indeed, there are older adults (I am one of them) who disdain as patronizing, being lumped together into categories such as senior or elder or retired.

The advantage of the word "Network" is threefold: (i) it is precisely descriptive of *what* it is - a social information network; (ii) with a simple locational word or two before the slash line, it is precisely descriptive of *where* it is; and (iii) it is secular -- in no way interpreted as code for age, which allows you to have the great benefit of adults of all ages.

2. Open your GoogleGroups Account

Only one person can set up the free GG Account within which your Network will operate, and he is called "Owner." There is also a category called "Manager," which has the same access inside the group's site as the "Owner." You should have two or three Managers to cover each other's absences. All remaining participants are called "Member."

Go on Google Groups.com and follow the clear directions. You will need to enter the following:

- * Your name (use your full name), your email address, and your password;
- * Whether you want your group open to the public, or restricted -- you want it restricted to your members;
- * Your "nickname" that will appear on each of your posts (GG speak for email) -- use your full name. In open-to-the-public groups, one prudently wants to hide one's identity; in a restricted group, members should know who is sending messages;
- * a few sentences on what kind of group you are creating; and
- * Your group's email address, e.g., xyznetwork@googlegroups.com.

3. Send an Invitation Letter

Send a letter to each domicile in your defined area, explaining how helpful the XYZ/Network will be, what its focus areas are, who your Preferred Partners are, and whatever you believe is appropriate to your neighbors -- and certainly -- that it is free. Depending on your geography, you may need help from your local Post Office to get a list of addresses.

In your letter, enclose a "Participation Sign-up Sheet" which states that *if the person would like to join the XYZ/Network, he should fill-out the sheet and mail it back to you.* Put in lines for name, address, telephone number, and email address. You might also want to include a few lines for comments.

4. Entering Member Information

When you start receiving the completed forms, the pleasure of logging in your members begins; here's where I can share with you the benefit of valuable code-writing expertise (not mine).

GG is extremely concerned about spam and spammers, and I can attest that it is on red-hot alert to catch them, shut them down, and to use its word, "ban" them. The GG system is this: the Owner "invites" individuals to be members of his group, and the invitee emails that he "accepts." I thought that procedure was a bit too cumbersome for us, and devised something more appropriate for a restricted group, and easier for all concerned.

On your group's site, go to the "Invite Members" page. On the left, you will see "invite members by email" (the cumbersome route) and on the right you will see "Add Members Directly" (the easier way) - go there. Note the cautionary statement about only inviting people you know, and take pleasure in not being a spammer because you're holding in your hand a "Sign-up Sheet" filled out by someone who desires to join your group.

Enter your new Member thusly: "Mary Jane Doe" <mjd@aol.com>

Check “send email for each message and update.” The instant you check “Add Members,” that person is a Member, and can start receiving/sending posts. Here’s my reasoning behind this maneuver: I thought it absolutely necessary that a member’s full name appear on every post he sends, for the benefit of all participants – those quote marks and less/more than marks do that. (I also wanted Members’ Watergate building and apartment number to show, but that was not possible within the GG architecture when I entered our information.)

Two good geeks on the GG help site told me that if I use the “Add Members Directly” way, I should never ever enter more than 10 new members at a time; I disregarded the advice, entered 11, and poof! Like a scared terror remembering the sting of the electric fence, subsequently, I would only enter 9 new members at a time, wait a few hours, then 9 more, and so on. So, you are warned!

I’m happy to help you in any way I can – just email me -- good health, good living, and good luck.

patricia moore